

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 DHA-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 SY-05  
A-01 OPR-02 MCT-01 COME-00 AID-05 PC-01 /117 W  
-----250933 040309 /15

P R 241701Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7029

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 370

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, SS, MR

SUBJECT: POLISARIO ATTACKS ZOUERATE-NOUADHIBOU RAIL LINE

REF: 76 NOUAKCHOTT 319

1. ACCORDING TO SPANISH DIPLOMAT, POLISARIO FORCE  
HIT TRAIN CARRYING IRON ORE FROM ZOUERATE (2242N 1230W) TO HUADHIBOU .  
(1758N 1521W) ON FEBRUARY 20 AT 2000 HOURS  
AT A POINT NEAR CHOUM TUNNEL (2120N 1300W). TWO LOCOMOTIVES  
WERE DISABLED. POLISARIO FORCE CONSISTED OF TWO LANDROVERS, ONE  
OF WHICH WAS DESTROYED BY PURSUING GIRM AIRCRAFT. POLISARIO  
LOSSES UNKNOWN; MAURITANIAN CASUALTIES WERE ONE DEAD AND ONE  
BADLY INJURED.  
AS OF FEBRUARY 22, TWO LOCOMOTIVES ARE STILL OUT OF COMMISSION.

2. OF TWO ENGINES DISABLED IN DECEMBER 18 ATTACK (REFTEL),  
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ONE HAS BEEN PUT BACK INTO SERVICE BUT SECOND REMAINS INOPERATIVE. CURRENT SCORE: THREE DOWN.

3. GIRM HAS MADE ELABORATE ARRANGEMENTS FOR FEBRUARY  
26 CELEBRATION OF FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF REUNION OF FORMER  
LOWER SPANISH SAHARA AND MAURITANIA. FEBRUARY 20 ATTACK  
MAY BE FIRST OF POLISARIO ATTEMPTS TO CELEBRATE FEBRUARY

26 ANNIVERSARY IN ITS OWN WAY TO COINCIDE WITH OAU MINISTERS MEETING AND OPENING ARAB-AFRICAN SUMIT. POLISARIO PRESUMABLY WOULD LIKE TO ACHIEVE MAJOR POLITICAL OR PROPAGANDA IMPACT "VICTORY"-- SUCH AS SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON CHOUM TUNNEL OR HIGHLY-VISIBLE HIT-AND-RUN ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT OR OTHER MAJOR POPULATION CENTER.

4. COMMENT: (A) MAURITANIANS ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF BOTH CRITICITY AND VULNERABILITY OF CHOUM TUNNEL, AND HAVE DIRECTED MAJOR MILITARY EFFORT TO ITS DEFENSE. BUT IF POLISARIO COULD PENETRATE DEFENSES AND DAMAGE OR DESTROY TUNNEL, IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO INTERRUPT FLOW OF IRON ORE FOR CONSIDERABLE PERIOD--DEPENDING ON EXTENT OF DAMAGE INFLICTED--DES-PITE SEVEN TO EIGHT WEEKS ORE STOCKPILE IN NOUADHIBOU. (B) NCE PRESIDENTIAL COMPOUND NEXT DOOR TO EMBASSY IS ONE OF FOUR MOST ATTRACTIVE TARGETS TO POLISARIO BOMB SQUAD (OTHER ARE SIDE BY SIDE HEADQUARTERS OF ARMY AND GENDARMERIE NATIONALE, PETROLEUM TANK FARM AT WHARF, AND MARHABA HOTEL/MAINPOST OFFICE IN DOWNTOWN AREA), WE HAVE INCREASED SECURITY PRECAUTIONS AROUND CHANCEY COMPOUND AND IN-TOWN RESIDENCES, AND INTEND TO MAINTAIN LOW VISIBILITY FOR NEXT FEW DAYS, AND HAVE INFORMALLY SUGGESTED PRIVATE AMERICANS FOLLOW SUIT). WE DO NOT SEE AMERICANS AS TARGETED GROUP; WE BELIEVE THAT US COMMUNITY, OFFICIAL ANDPRIVATE, CAN SUCCESSFULLY NEGOTIATE POSSIBLE BAD PATCH BY STAYING AWAY FROM PEOPLE AND PLACES WHICH ARE.

HANDYSIDE

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** IRON, RAILROADS, ACCIDENTS, RAIL SHIPMENTS  
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**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Reference:** 76 NOUAKCHOTT 319  
**Retention:** 0  
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**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** POLISARIO ATTACKS ZOUEATE-NOUADHIBOU RAIL LINE  
**TAGS:** MOPS, PFOR, SS, MR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009